THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF BIG IDEA PRODUCTIONS

# What's the Big Idea?

SPRING 98

includes

**Coloring and Activities**
**An Interview With a Grape**
**The Latest Veggie T-shirts**
**and lots more!**

Plus! Behind the Scenes with

# Josh and the Big Wall!

# Welcome!

Welcome to the Big Idea newsletter! By now, you've probably gotten to know our spokesmen, Bob and Larry, pretty well. We thought it would be nice if you could get to know the company and the people behind the tomato and the cucumber a little better. We thought it was time to start answering the question, "What's the Big Idea?"

It is no secret that we live in a media-drenched culture. In the last two generations we have replaced the dining room with the TV room - giving up the art of family conversation for the drone of the nightly news. In far too many American homes, the only after-dinner interaction is the tireless battle for the remote control.

The effects of this fundamental shift in family life shows up dramatically in our children. Hollywood, acting as "surrogate parent," has given us a generation of kids who know more about sex at age 7 than their grandparents did on their wedding nights; a generation whose adolescents are only too eager to exchange the "virtual" firepower of their Nintendos for guns and bullets with significantly greater impact.

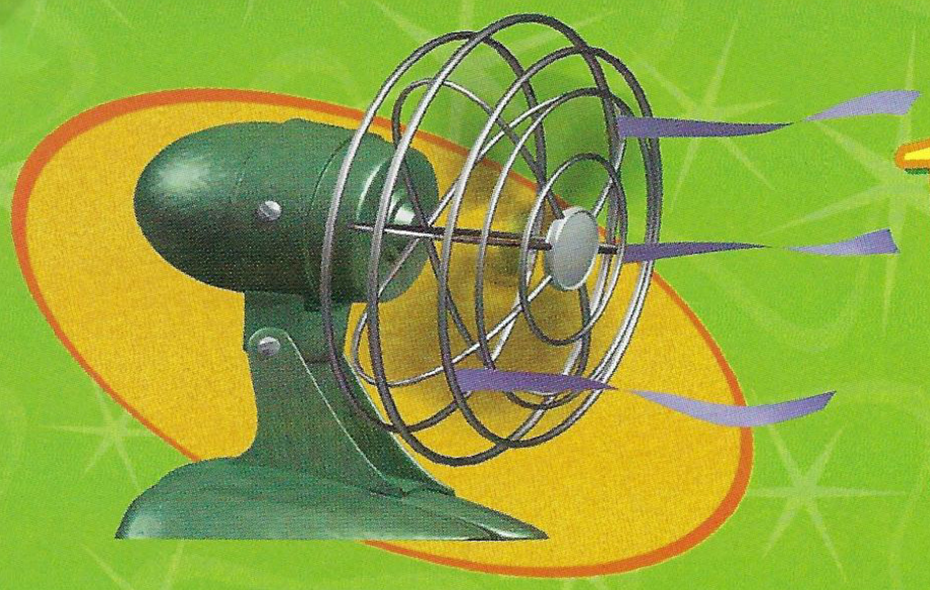
In a culture where the influence of media cannot be avoided, we as parents must respond by actively scrutinizing the programs our children watch. Furthermore, alternatives must be provided that teach Biblical values in an attractive, entertaining format.

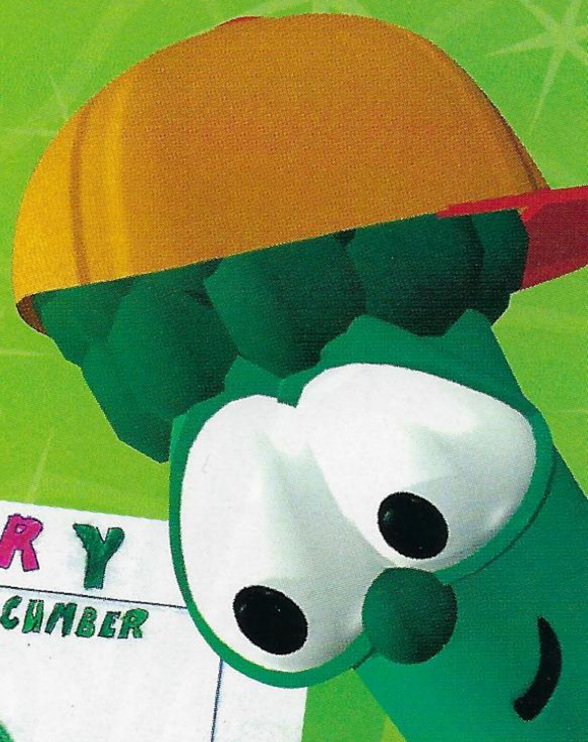
We at Big Idea Productions are committed to providing these alternatives. We are committed to proving to the world that children's media can do more than sell toys; it can change lives. *That* is the Big Idea.

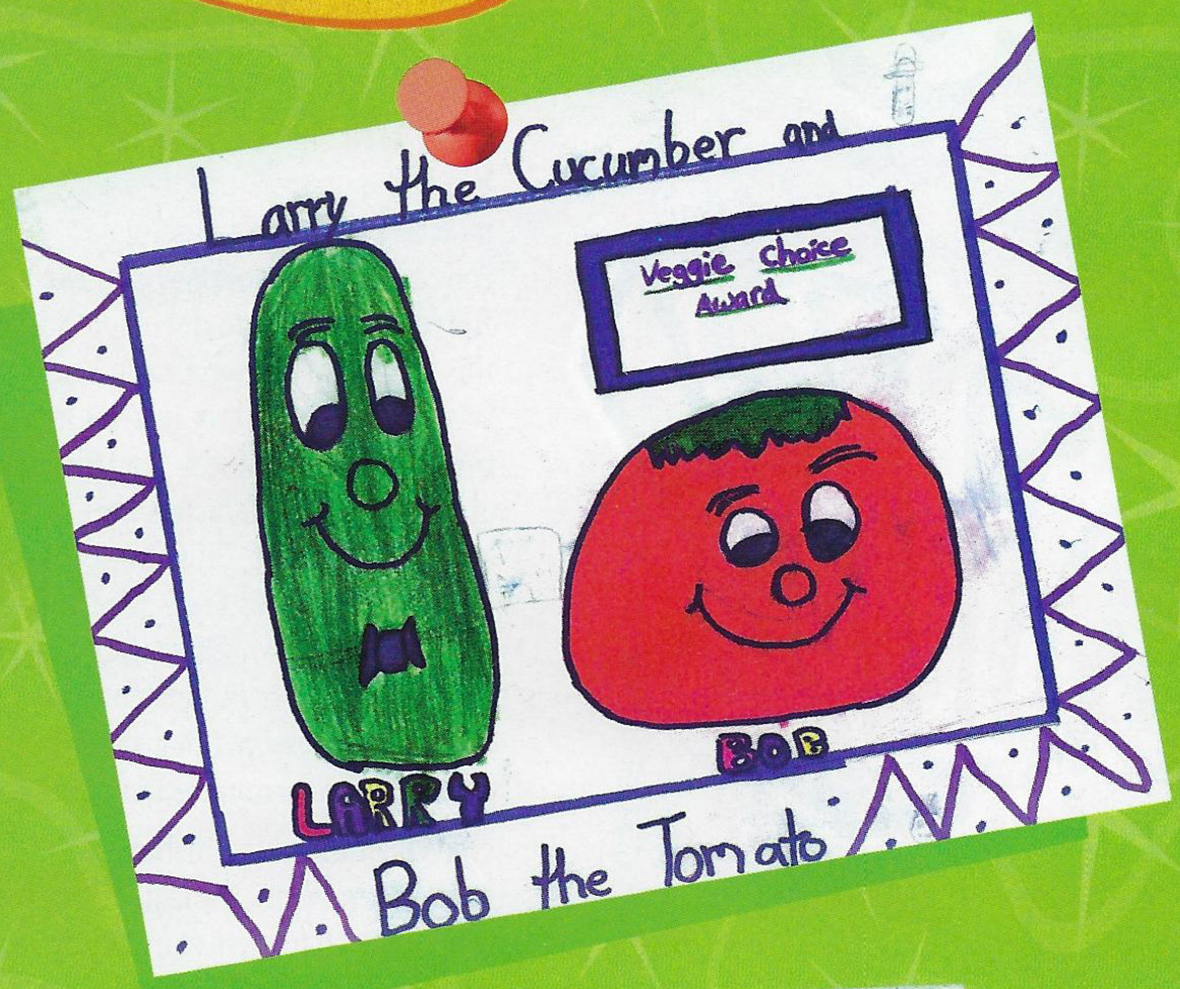
*Phillip Vischer*
*CEO/Chief Creative Officer*

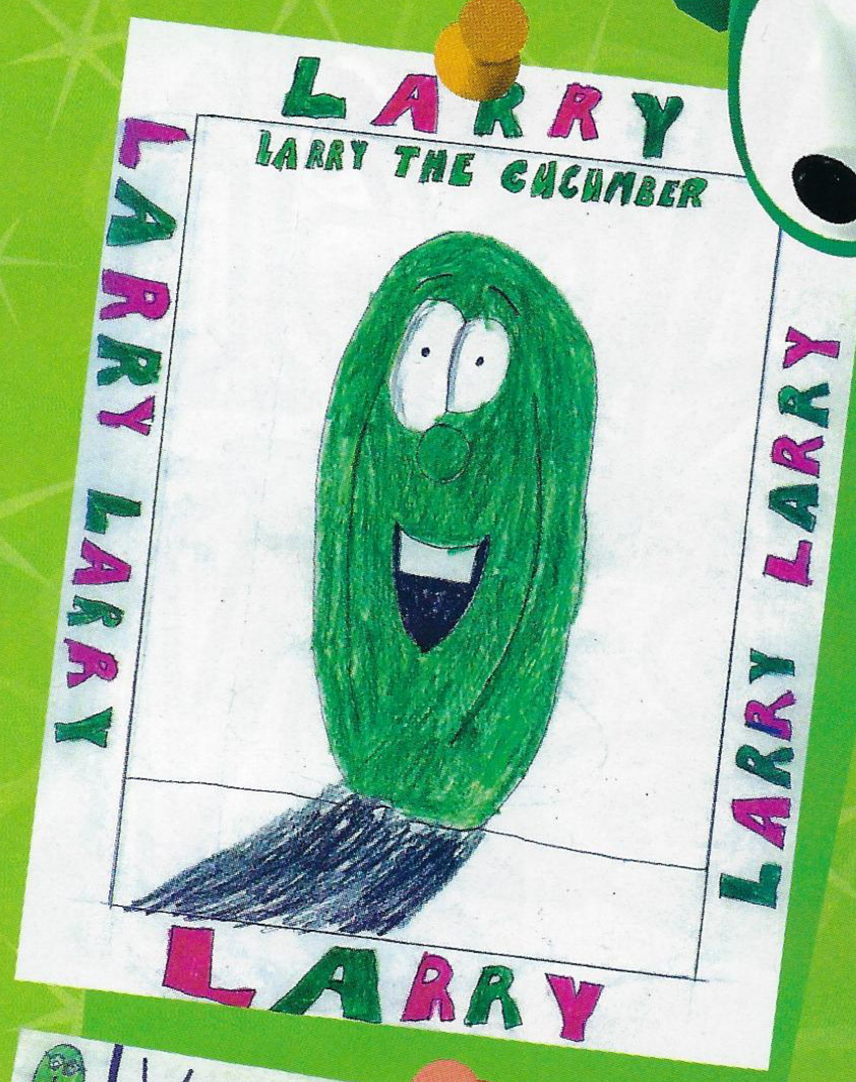
BIG IDEA™

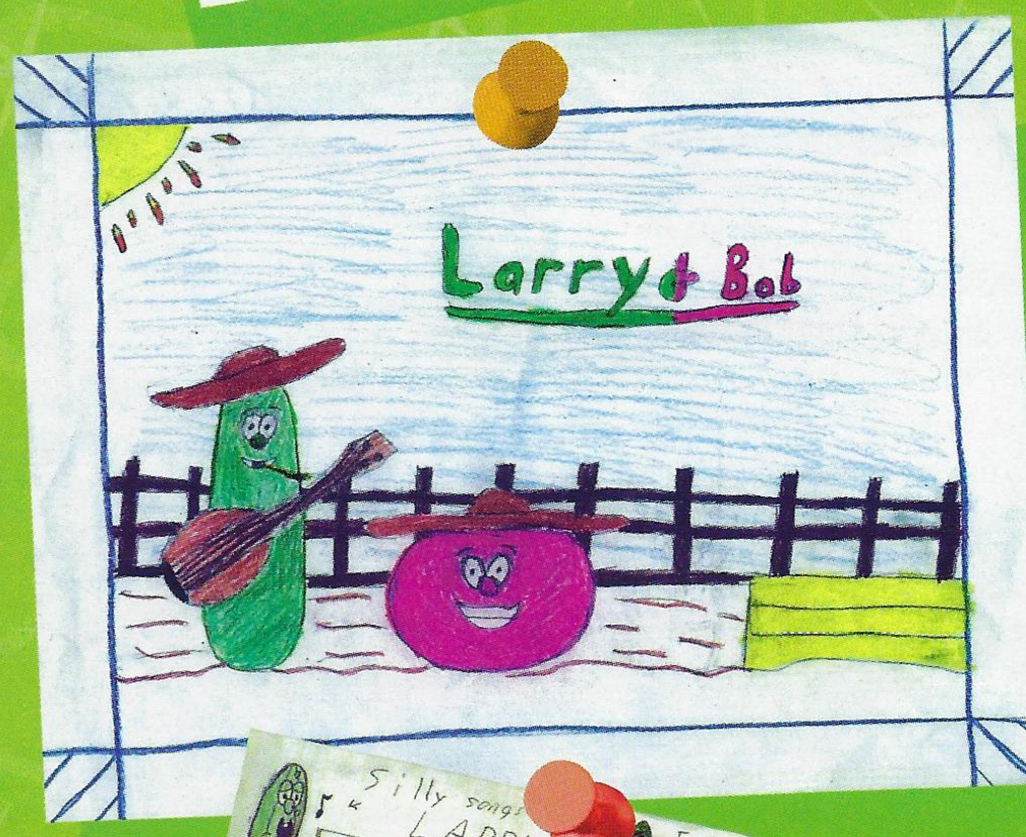
# Fan Mail!

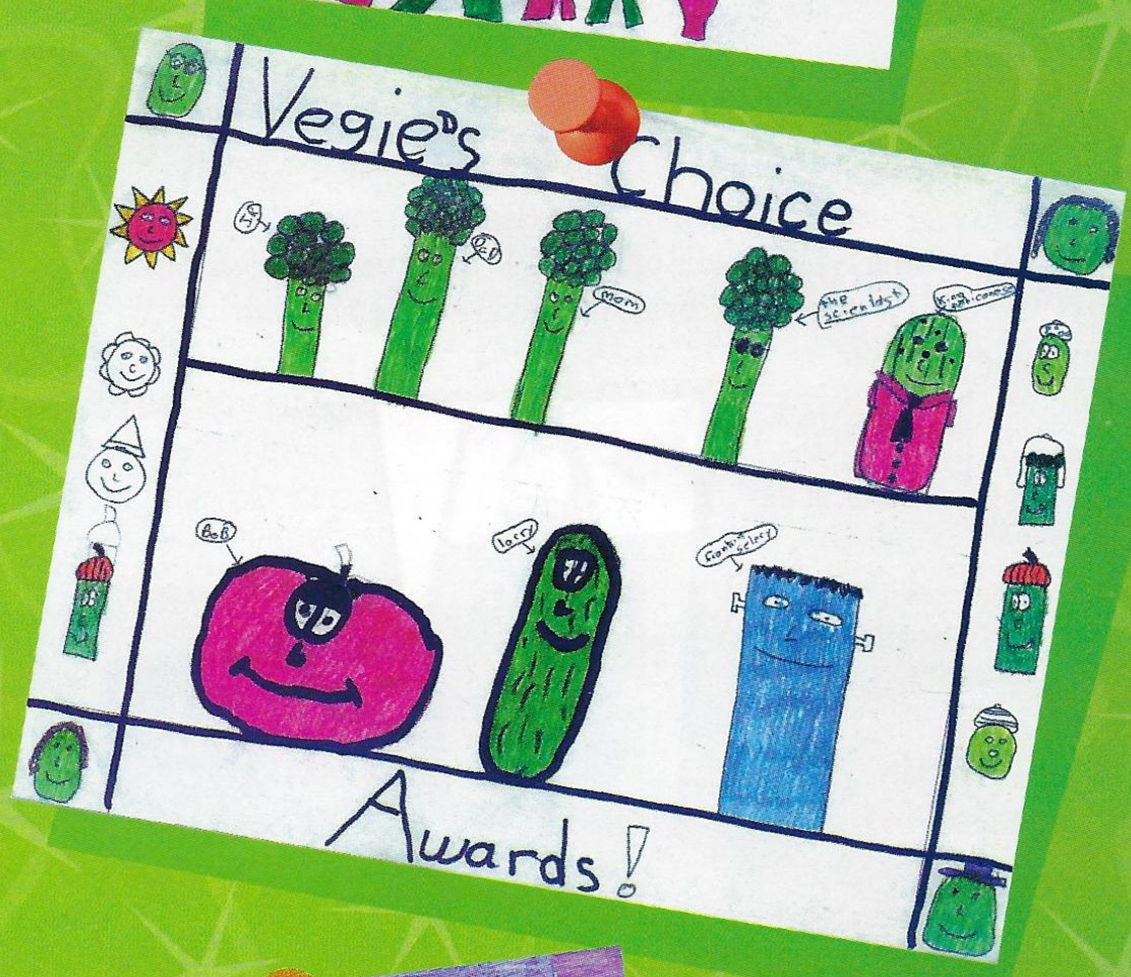


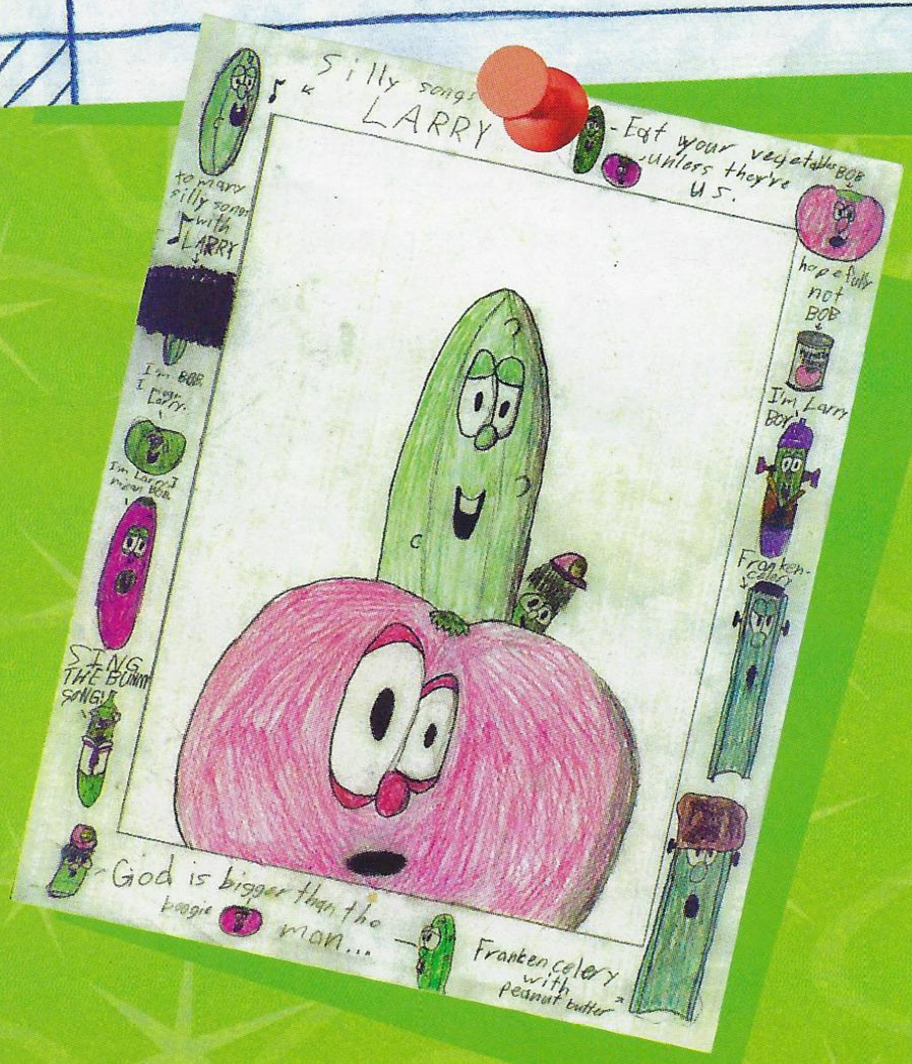




Special thanks to Baymonte Christian School's 6B Class for the letters and drawings!

# Behind the Scenes Part 1

# Josh and the Big Wall!



Ever wonder how a story like *Josh and the Big Wall!* goes from a blank piece of paper to your TV screen? Welcome to the first in a series of glimpses "behind the scenes" at Big Idea! This installment will look at the earliest stages of the development of a new video- scriptwriting and conceptual design. So fasten your seatbelt, and please keep your arms and legs inside the tram at all times!

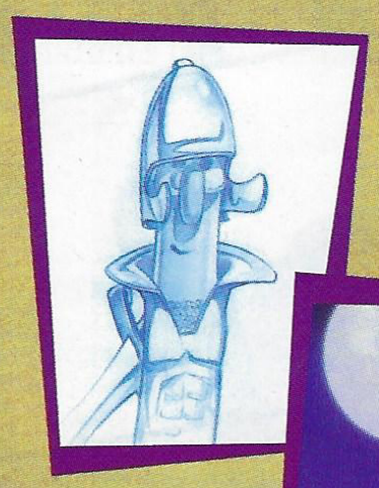
## Stage One: The Script

### The Big Idea

"Ideas can come from anywhere," says Big Idea chief creative Phil Vischer. "If we're not retelling a Bible story, then we might be parodying other shows like *Gilligan's Island*, *Batman* or *Star Trek*. We may also start with a classic story or a book like *The Grapes of Wrath*. In that case, just the name itself inspired a family of cranky grapes and a story about forgiveness, which of course has nothing to do with the original book."

### The Nugget of Truth

"Every story we tell starts with a 'nugget of truth,'" says Phil. At Big Idea, a nugget of truth is a value-based lesson that is so simple and easy to grasp that even a four year old can "pick it up, put it in their pocket, and carry it with them the rest of their life." For example, in *Where's God When I'm Scared?* the nugget is "you don't have to be afraid, because God is the biggest." In *Larry-Boy and the Fib from Outer Space*, we learn that "a lie will trap you, but the truth will set you free!" Big Idea's stories are crafted to present these truths in the most effective, entertaining way possible.



Coming up with the 'nugget' is a roundtable process involving Phil Vischer, his wife Lisa and educational consultant Scottie May. This "Nugget Development Team" usually selects the value first, then develops the lesson to be learned. In *Josh and the Big Wall!*, the value is obedience, while the "nugget of truth" is "it's better to do things God's way than our own way."

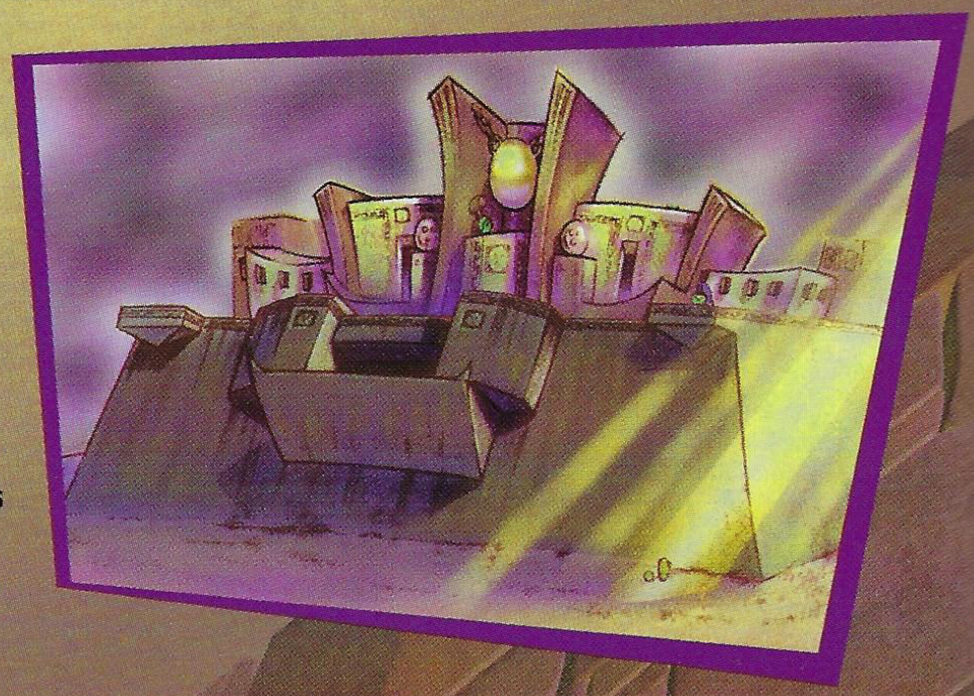
### Crafting the Story

The work of building the "nugget of truth" is collaborative, but the story itself belongs to the writer. Since the purpose of *VeggieTales* is to provide parents with an entertaining way to teach values to their kids, the writer must incorporate the value and nugget into the story in such a clever, entertaining way that kids won't even notice they're learning a lesson!

The first step in the writing process is a half-page premise. This premise very roughly describes what the story will be about and how it will teach the lesson.

From this premise, an outline is developed. Each outline starts with just three lines— "Act 1, Act 2 and Act 3" (every *VeggieTales* story is a three act drama)— but soon develops into two full pages describing every scene, song, and major "gag" or joke. While the premise may be born in a morning or out of a lunchtime conversation, the outline can take a full week or more to develop. It is at this stage that the writer can begin to see how well the story teaches the nugget. "The outline is not primarily about what the characters are saying," says Phil, "but about what they are doing and feeling." Until everyone is convinced the story is both entertaining and effective in teaching the lesson, not a single line of dialogue is committed to paper.

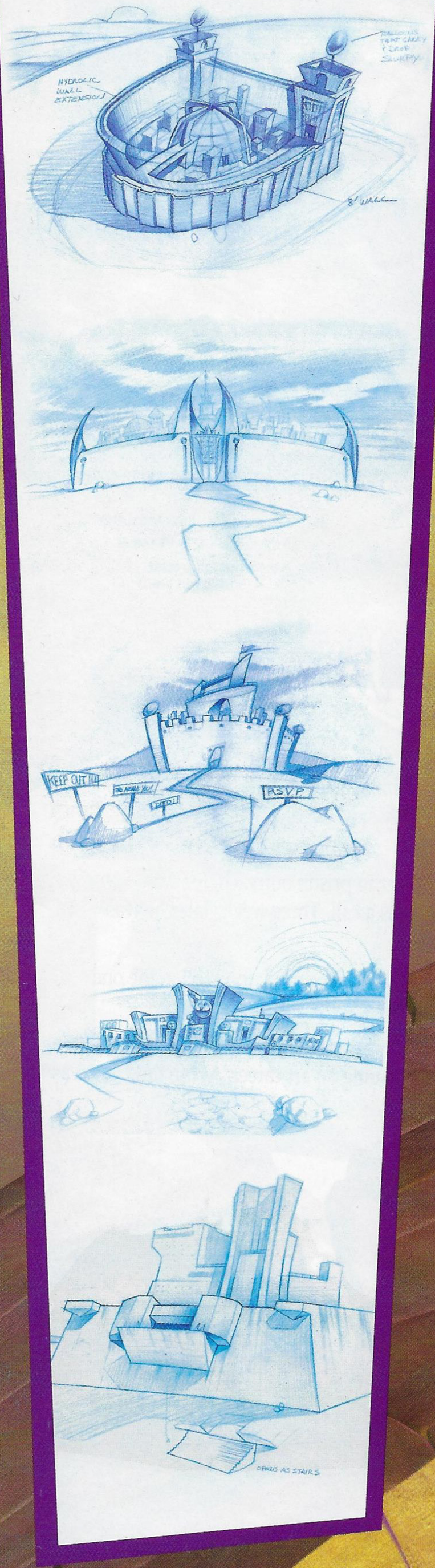
Once the outline is finished, the writing can begin. At last, the writer can let the characters start talking! This is when the jokes and "general silliness" come in. Even while thinking silly thoughts, the writer must keep a careful eye on the structure and directions laid out in the outline. Once the script is completed, copies are passed out at Big Idea and the "feedback" begins! "Kids don't know that word— find a different word!" the content advisors may say, or "Slushees? How are we supposed to make Slushees?" the effects team might gripe, or "There are 12 characters in this scene and they're all dancing! Are you crazy?!?" the animators may holler. Yes, it's a fun time to be a writer! After words are fixed and "Slushee R&D" solutions are suggested, we have a final script. It's time to make some pictures!



**Early concept art for the City of Jericho. Animators refer to this art for color, shape, lighting and detail.**

# The Birth of a City

**Here are just a few of the many 'blue line' sketches created by Joe Sapulich to determine the look of the walled city of Jericho.**



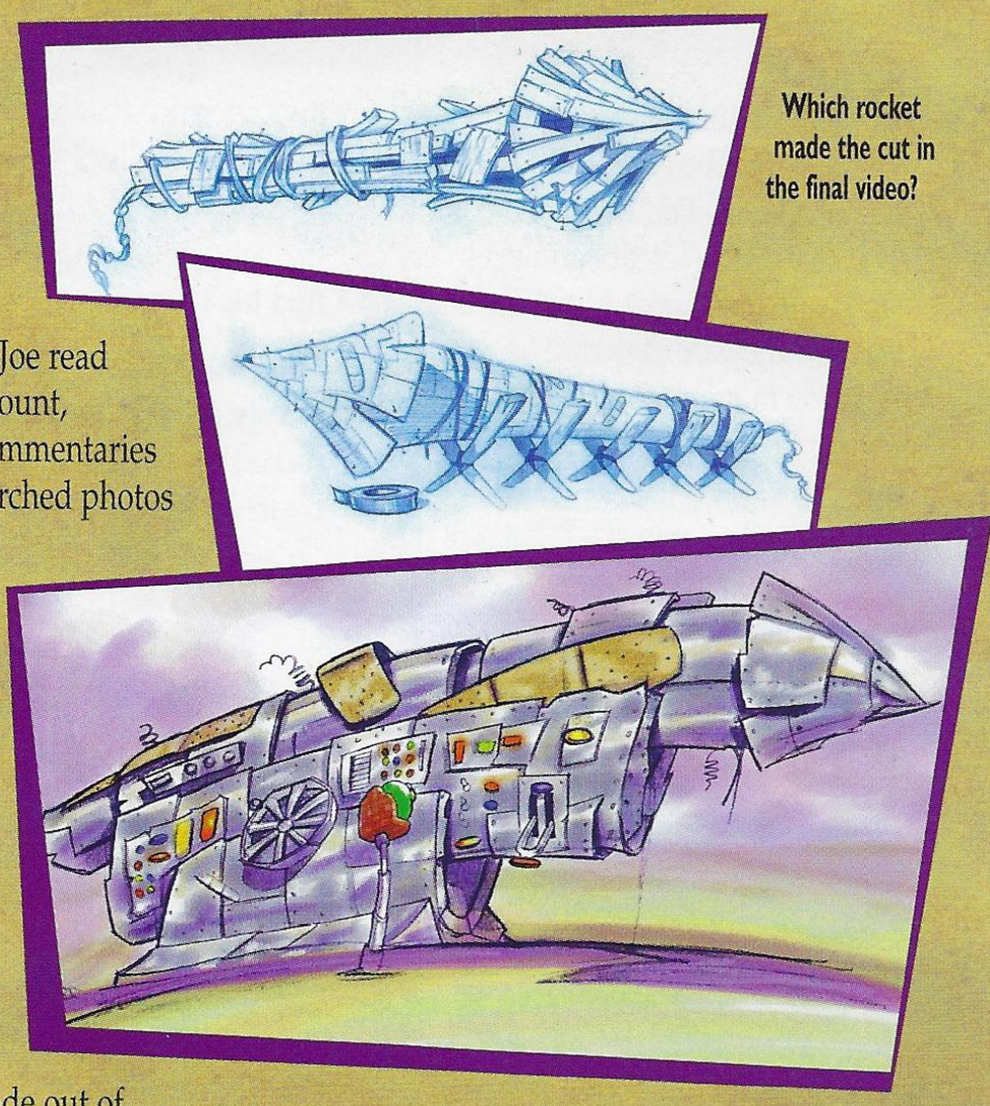

## Stage Two: Conceptual Art

The next phase of production on a VeggieTales episode is the design of the sets, props and characters mentioned in the script. For *Josh and the Big Wall!*, that meant designing the town of Jericho, the Ark of the Covenant and costumes and props for every character. Big Idea Senior Designer Joe Sapulich got the assignment.

### "Blue Lines"

Conceptual sketches are usually drawn in blue pencil, giving the drawings the name "blue lines." "I could do these sketches on the computer," says Joe, "but I try to keep more of a human feel to the ideas. If I design with the computer, all the sets start to look the same." Why blue? We have no idea. All the artists were too busy drawing to tell us.

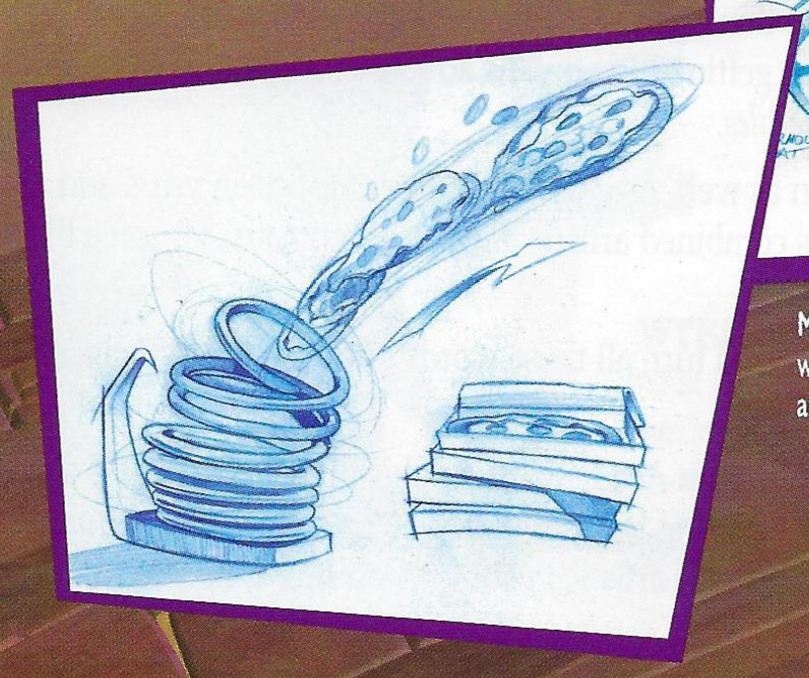
To design the city of Jericho, Joe read the Biblical account, checked out commentaries and even researched photos from archeological digs. First, he did some fairly realistic drawings of what the city may have looked like, followed by more and more creative ideas (walls made out of glass, walls that go up and down, etc.). All in all, Joe sketched more than 20 variations of the city. The designs were then critiqued by the show's director and producer. (In this case, Phil Vischer and Chris Olsen.) Some ideas were rejected for creative reasons ("Too scary." "Too cutesy!"), others for technical reasons ("If the walls are glass, we'll have to build the inside of the city, too!"). In the end, Phil and Chris settled on a design and Joe proceeded to the next stage, full color comps.

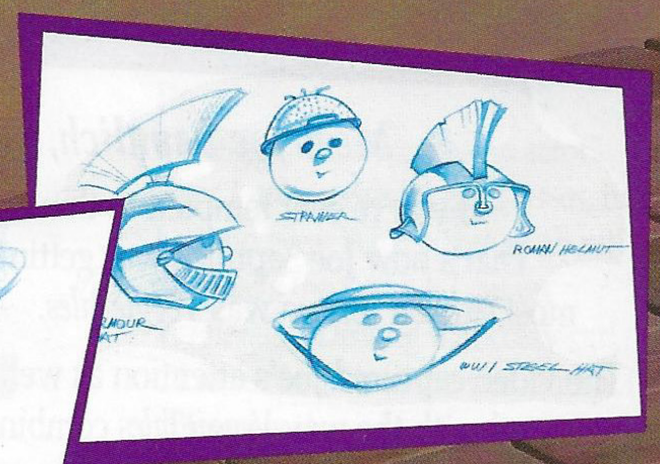


Which rocket made the cut in the final video?

### Color Comps

Now Joe switched from pencil to computer. The approved sketches were scanned into his Macintosh





Many concept drawings were done for details like the weapons used by the Jericho peas (pizza thrower at left) and the costumes (Jericho pea helmet study above).

workstation and Joe, using software packages Adobe Photoshop and MetaCreations Painter, added color to the "blue lines," creating images very similar to traditional pastel sketches. Because they are digital, changes can be made in minutes instead of hours. "Make the flags blue! Make the walls lighter! What if the sky was yellow? The cucumber orange? What will this

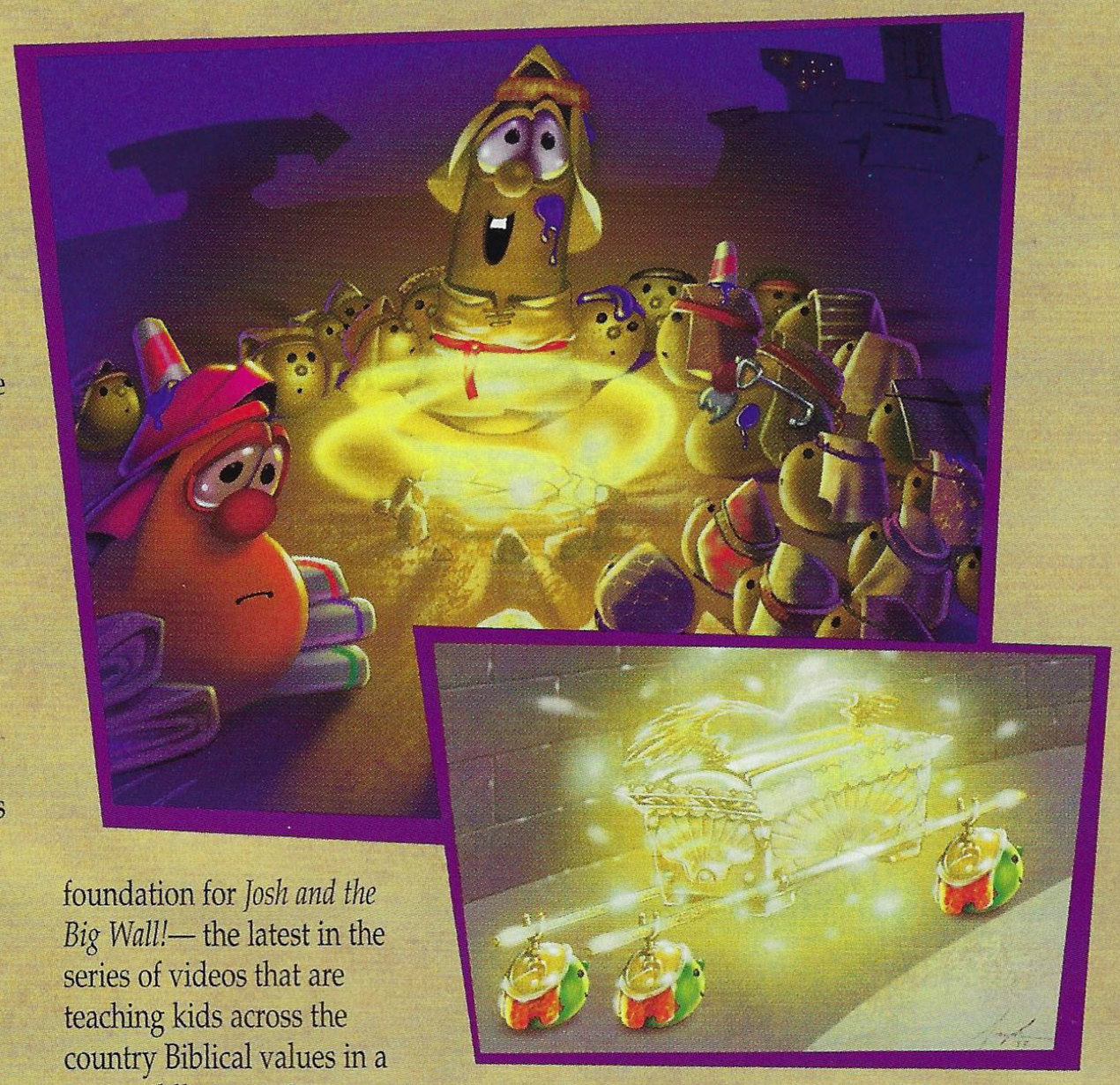
set look like at night?" Sometimes Joe will generate dozens of color variations working off the same pencil sketch. In fact, halfway through a production it's common to find the walls of Joe's office literally covered with art. (Sometimes making it a bit hard to find Joe!)

## Key Scene Paintings

Finally, the producer and director picked several key scenes and had Joe create highly detailed, almost photo-realistic paintings. "I try to make each piece look like a fine art painting that you would want to frame, Joe says. "That gets everybody working on that particular piece excited about being a part of it."

By the time the production was completed, Joe Sapulich had created literally hundreds of design sketches detailing everything from Joshua's wardrobe to the burning bush to the little hooks on the Levite Peas' headgear needed to carry the Ark. Together with Phil Vischer's script, Joe's art laid the creative foundation for *Josh and the Big Wall!*— the latest in the series of videos that are teaching kids across the country Biblical values in a new, wildly inventive way.

At Big Idea, it's all in a days work.



Joe's work looks very dimensional, even though the actual '3-D' work comes later in the animation process.



# Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dream Job

### *Meet Joe Sapulich, Senior Designer / Concept Artist*

If you're ever tempted to think watching videos with your child might be a waste of time, think again. That's how Joe Sapulich was getting to know his adopted son, Joshua. And of all the videos they saw, the one that most excited Joshua was *VeggieTales*.

The video captured Joe's attention as well. As a freelance artist for fifteen years and an active volunteer in prison outreach, Joe was impressed with the way *VeggieTales* combined artistic talent with ministry. He gave Big Idea Productions a call. Three weeks later he was working for them.

It's Joe's job to take a *VeggieTales* story and turn all those words into pictures. When a new character or set is introduced, Joe is often the one responsible for the design.

Although Joe trained at Chicago's American Academy of Art, his digital art talent is self-taught. He always wanted to be an artist, but after going through a glass door in high school, severing tendons in both wrists, doctors discouraged him from pursuing an art career. At the time, Joe was not a Christian, but he promised to use his artistic talent for God if God helped him recover.

During the next two years he struggled to regain his art skills, sometimes tying a pencil to his hand when his wrist wouldn't cooperate. He gradually got stronger, and one day a Bible given him by a friend reminded him of his promise to God. He read the entire New Testament, planning to refute the Christian beliefs of his friend. Instead, he believed what he read and became a Christian himself.

So, now Joe spends his work days using his artistic skills to help spread God's truth. It's what Joe calls "my dream job."

***Look for Joe's work in the upcoming* VeggieTales *video,* Madame Blueberry. *And if you have a story of how a* VeggieTales *product brought you closer to your own child(ren), write us. Perhaps we can include your story in a future issue!***

ILLUSTRATION BY BIG IDEA ARTIST JODY NILSEN

# An Interview with Pa Grape

**WTBI**
You appear to be older than many of the other characters. How do you get along with the younger generation?

**Pa**
The younger generation often looks to me for advice. What they don't know is that I was held back in the 2nd grade. For 13 years. But that's okay! They like me because I can speak their language; I'm hip to their groove, you dig?

**WTBI**
Uh, yeah. You also stand out because you are a fruit in the midst of so many vegetables. Does anyone ever make fun of you because you're different?

**Pa**
You should know that both Bob and Larry are, technically speaking, fruits. (Seeds on the inside!) So, actually, we fruits may be in the majority! It's those asparaguses, scallions, and celery that should feel left out. And Henry the Potato. What's a potato? I dunno.

**WTBI**
What has been your favorite role so far, and why?

**Pa**
My favorite role was probably as one of the pirates in *The Pirates Who Don't Do Anything*. We got to wear silly hats, we got paid and we didn't have to do anything! How could you beat that? My least favorite part was in *Josh and the Big Wall!* Walking around in the sun for days! Oi, was it hot! And the Slushees! Now we're hot *and* sticky! It was a nightmare. They say Titanic was hard—this was harder.

**WTBI**
Uh huh. Is there a certain Bible character you would like to play?

**Pa**
Well, I really wanted to play Moses in *Josh and the Big Wall!*, but they gave the part to Mr. Nezzer. They said he looked more like Charleton Heston. In my audition, I gave it more of a Mel Brooks spin. They didn't like it. What do they know?

**WTBI**
On a more personal note, tell us about your family.

**Pa**
Oh, we're very close. Yes, they're a little jealous that my acting career has taken off, but that's okay. They'll get their turns. Why, my son, Tom, just finished his first "Veggiecational" book: *Time for Tom.* At first we were worried that it would be one of those showbiz family tell-all kinda books. You know, like Carrie Fischer or *Mommie Dearest* or something. But it turned out real nice. We're very proud.

**WTBI**
What is your biggest challenge as an actor?

**Pa**
My biggest challenge as an actor? Easy. I got no eyes!! I got glasses, but I got no eyes! What's *that* all about? So what's the first job I get on *VeggieTales*? Driving that crazy car! Of *course* I run into the tree stump! I got no eyes!

**WTBI**
Well, what are your plans for the future?

**Pa**
I hope to bring many more great characters to the screen. And stay out of the sun. It's murder on us old grapes!

**WTBI**
Do you have any words of wisdom for all your fans?

**Pa**
Oh, yes. Never forget—God made you special, and He loves you very much! Oh, and one more thing: If Welch's invites you and a bunch of other grapes to an "open house," don't go. It's not what you think!

# Search the Slushee

**Try to find these words in the slushee. Remember, they may go up, down, or even at an angle!**

TRUMPETS
OBEY
WALL
JOSH
JUNIOR
TRUST
PEAS
SLUSHEE
ARK
DESERT
JERICHO
ISRAEL
MILK
HONEY
SHEEP
PROMISED LAND

D O S H E E P
P B S B M W A L L
R R C K L E X R S F J
J O L C W U Y K H S M
E M Q J N I S R A P I
R I T O F T E H H H L
I S R S O R H I E L K
C E U H B U S S T E H
H D S L E M E R I J U
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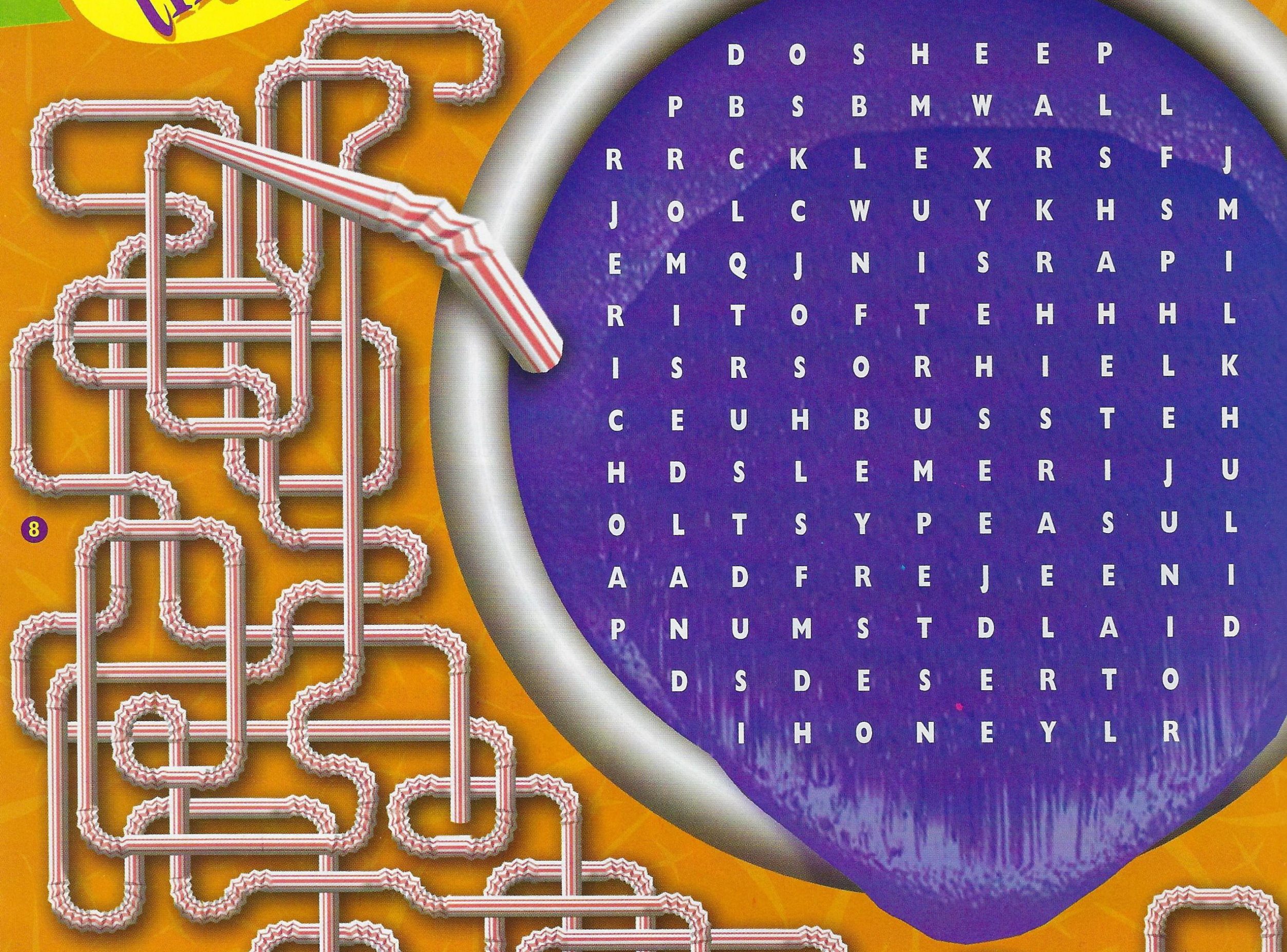

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# Follow that Straw!

**Only one of these straws makes it all the way to the slushee! See if you can figure it out.**

A
B
C

Color this!



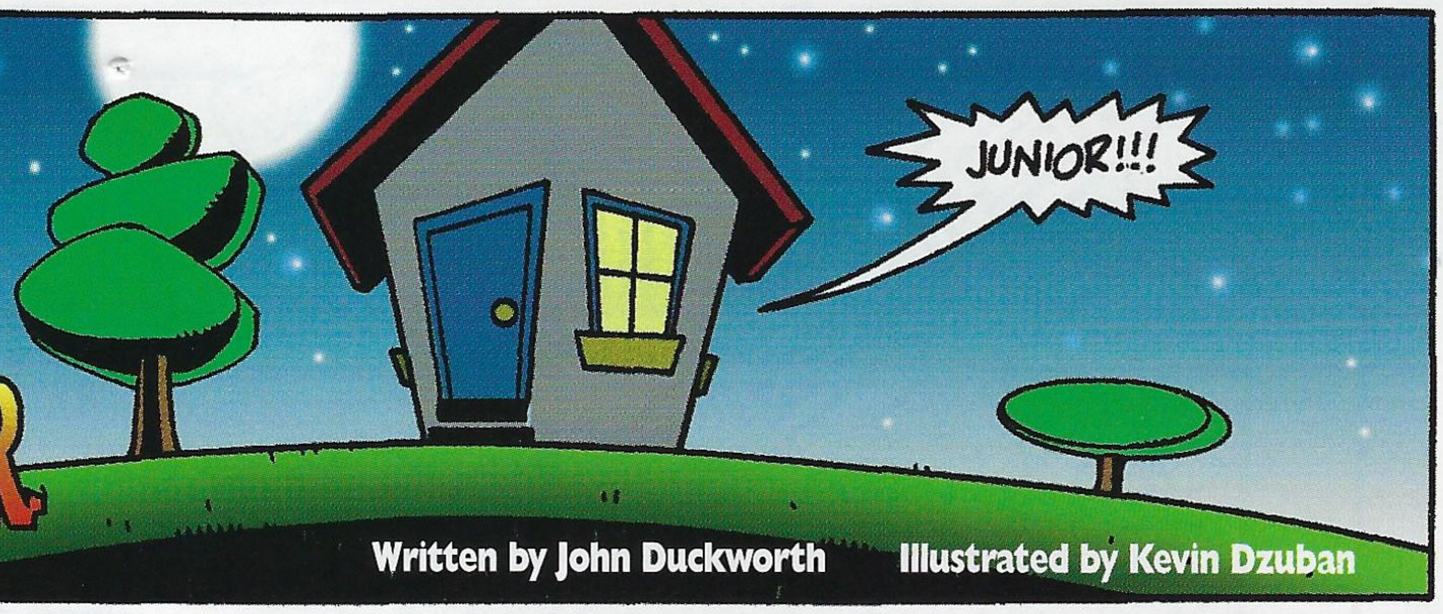
Josh and the Big Wall!

BIG IDEA™

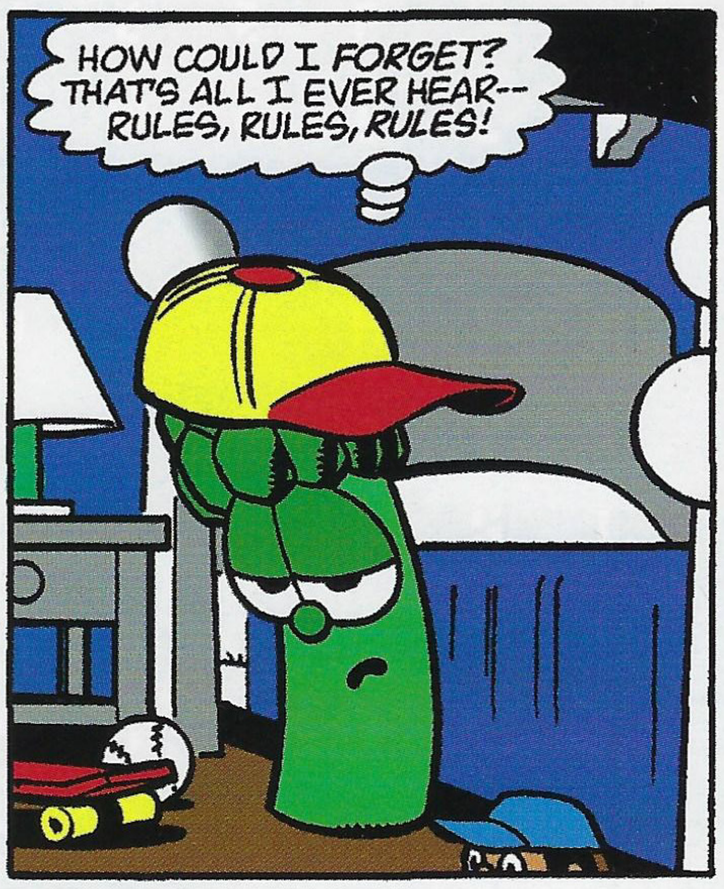
Presents

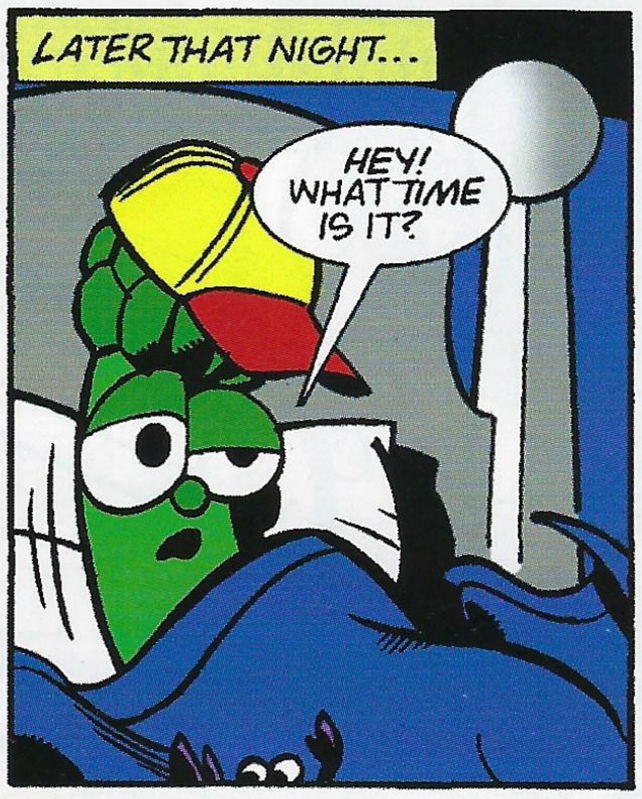
Junior Asparagus in

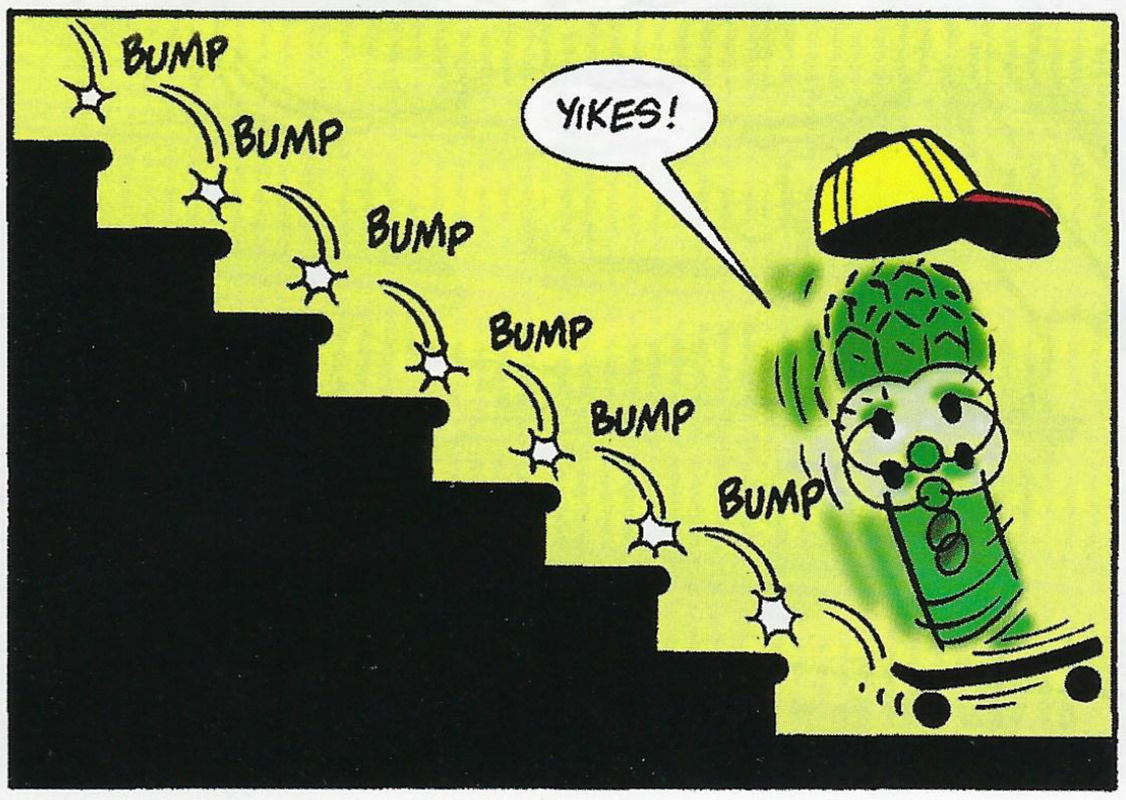
# QUEASY RIDER

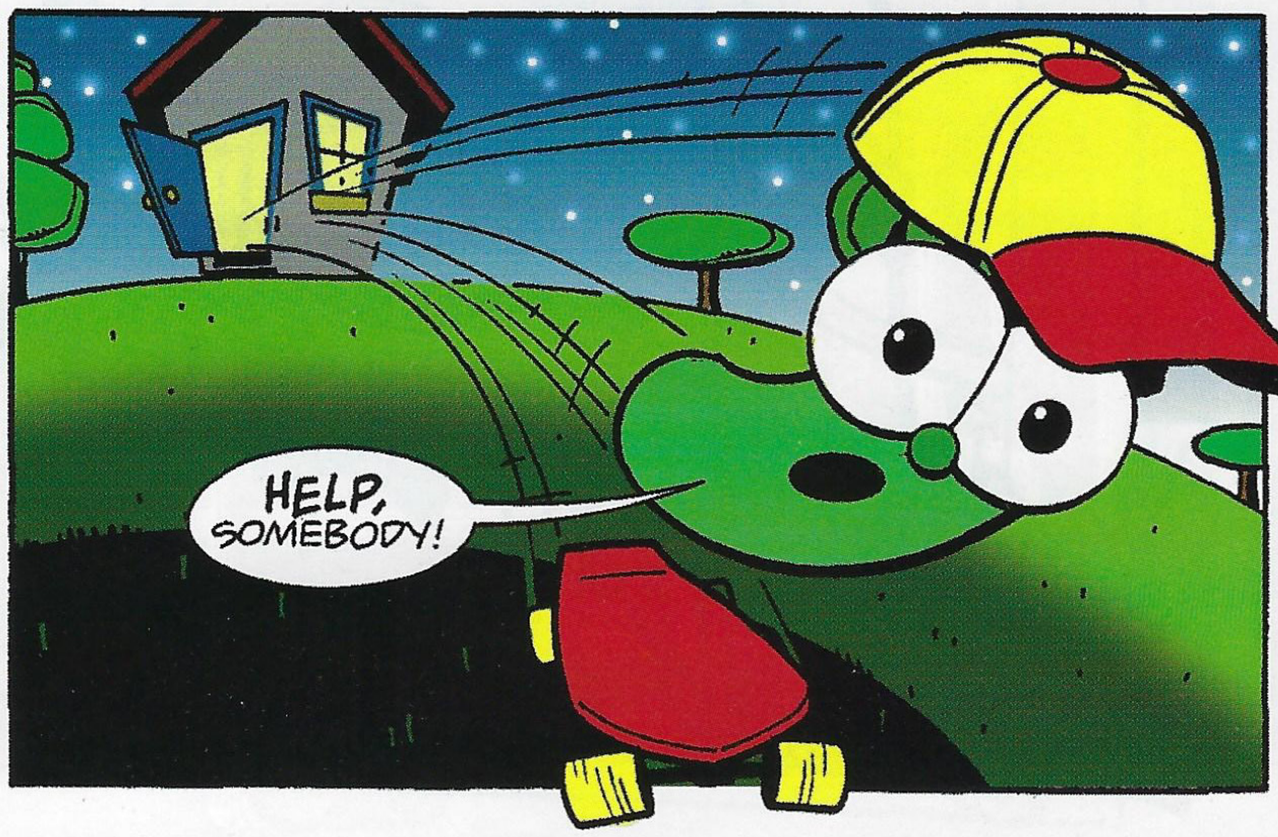



Written by John Duckworth  Illustrated by Kevin Dzuban







HI, LATE-NIGHT SKATE BOARDER! I'M BOB THE TOMATO...

AND I'M LARRY THE--

CRASH!

--CUCUMBER...

UH, BOB... ISN'T THAT *DEADGUY'S CURVE* UP AHEAD?

YOU MEAN THE MOST *DANGEROUS* SPOT IN TOWN? THE ONE WITH THE *THOUSAND FOOT DROP* TO A FOREST OF CACTUS AND BROKEN GLASS BELOW?

DANGER!

SLOW!

Uh... THAT WOULD BE THE ONE.

AAUGH!

POOF!

WHERE AM I? WOW-- IT WAS ALL A *DREAM!*

JUNIOR, IS THAT *YOU?* WHAT ARE YOU DOING UP AT *THIS* TIME OF NIGHT?

CLUNK!

THUMP!

I PICKED UP MY *TOYS*, DAD! I... Uh... DECIDED FOLLOWING THE RULES MIGHT BE A GOOD IDEA AFTER ALL.

I'M GLAD YOU OBEYED, SON...

...BUT WHY ARE YOU GOING TO BED WITH YOUR *BIKE HELMET* ON?

JUST IN CASE, DAD... JUST IN CASE!

?

THE END

# Up Against the Wall!

**Across:**

1. _____ the Cucumber
2. _____ Asparagus
5. The Israelites were God's chosen _____.
6. We know that He will take ___ of us. *(Josh singing)*
8. 'Cause we're going to the _____ land. *(all singing)*
10. And the wall ___ down. *(Bob)*
12. God gave you _____to eat! *(Junior)*
13. Jean Claude is a _____.
15. _____ and the Big Wall!
16. Last call for _____! *(Pa Grape)*
17. Hey, somebody's gotta carry that _____! *(the Israelite peas)*
18. It's gonna be so _____! *(all singing)*

**Down:**

1. The promised _____
2. Jimmy and _____ Gourd
3. But _____ won't knock down our wall! *(Jericho peas)*
4. Jericho was surrounded by a big ___.
5 Hey, I built the _____! *(Pa Grape)*
7. That's why they're stuck here in the _____. *(Bob)*
9. We were in _____! *(Tom Grape)*
11. They all set off again to march around _____. *(Bob)*
14. He told them that none of them could go into the promised land for forty _____. *(Bob)*
15. One of the Jericho pea's name was _____ Claude.

# About the Ark

**Who made the ark?**

a. Moses
b. Bezalel
c. Joshua

**How big was it?**

a. As big as a house
b. 2.5 cubits long by 1.5 cubits wide and 1.5 cubits high
c. The size of a shoebox

**What kind of wood was it made of?**

a. Oak
b. Acacia
c. Walnut

**What was it covered with?**

a. Gold
b. Silver
c. Bronze

**The poles were made to:**

a. Stand it up
b. Protect it
c. Carry it

**On the top were shapes of:**

a. Horses
b. birds
c. Cheribum (angels)

**The answers to these questions can be found in the Bible!**
(Exodus 37:1-9)

You can also find the answers to all the games and puzzles in this issue on the back page of this newsletter.

An all new VeggieTales® adventure,
coming to Christian bookstores July '98!

# Madame Blueberry

# Teaching Kids Obedience

by Lisa Vischer

Wednesday morning
We're off to the zoo...
almost.
"Get dressed, we're late."
Baby finds purse.
Kids are watching TV.
"I said, get your clothes on right now."
Kids still watching TV.
Baby is eating lipstick.
"If I have to ask you again, we're not going!"
Second grader returns with mismatched clothes.
"You can't wear that. Wear this."
She protests.
I protest louder.
"Now put on your shoes... but not your clogs!"
Angry second grader. Toddler, still in his pajamas, smiles.
I don't.
"Why do you have to make this so hard?!"
Dress the toddler.
The baby is eating gum, wrapper and all.
"Can we please go now?!"
Toddler is removing all his clothes to use the bathroom. (Groan)
Finally we're ready.
"Ok, please go get in the car right now!"
No visible movement.
"I said now!!!"
Painfully slow movement.
On our way. The sky looks like rain.
And I've forgotten my purse....

Sound familiar? Helping kids make right choices is hard. We need God's instruction. Like a parent with our best interest in mind, He wants us to trust His directives (as is seen in *Josh and the Big Wall!*). God teaches all his children to obey because "His way is the best way." Our children need us to raise them properly by teaching and instructing them about God (Ephesians 6:4 ). This includes cultivating obedience.

## Why Teach Obedience?

Obedience is God's way of protecting us from harm. Wrong choices often have disastrous consequences. News headlines and statistics on promiscuity, drug abuse and violence indicate our national failure to properly train our kids.

Also, as their authority figure, we represent God to our children. How we treat them will influence their spiritual growth and how they view God. Learning submission to loving authority will encourage surrender to God and His ways as they become adults.

However, God's goal isn't robotic compliance. Hebrews 8:10 says that God writes His laws on our minds and our hearts. This verse indicates God's desire for 'inward obedience'—to not be conformed but transformed, from the inside out.

Okay, then... How?

## Encourage

Being created by God as unique individuals gives children inestimable worth and value. Try to champion who they are despite what they do by affirming them at least twice for every reprimand and expressing our confidence in them often. Also, the security of unconditional love encourages them to bring their concerns and mistakes to us as they grow older. A big plus!

**Zoo redo: "I can't wait to see how fast you'll get ready today!"**

## Exemplify

Do I observe the speed limit? Do I interrupt my kids to remind them to stop interrupting me? Do I treat them with respect? We have a natural tendency to imitate. Christ came to model for us perfect obedience, and imitating Him

ILLUSTRATION BY BIG IDEA ARTIST JODY NILSEN

will give our children a good example to follow.

**Zoo redo: Thorough preparation the night before would've promoted patience. And self-controlled reactions are a matter of prayer and choice.**

## Empower

In the book *Kids are Worth It!* Barbara Coloroso suggests inflexible rules only for "life-threatening, morally threatening, and unhealthy" situations (like playing with matches, cheating, or brushing teeth). Otherwise, let age appropriate decision-making abound! Offer several snack options so the child has a choice. Or allow her to select her outfit!

(Cringing? Coloroso suggests separating school and play clothes or making an "I dressed myself!" button for your younger children.) Remember, the goal of parenting isn't our ultimate control, but their self-control.

**Zoo redo: "Thank you for getting dressed so quickly, and I'll stick your tennis shoes in my bag in case you want to change later."**

## Enforce

When enforcing, try controlling your responses by taking a "time-out" to avoid an overreaction. This preserves everyone's dignity and models handling feelings assertively. In choosing consequences, attempt Coloroso's R.S.V.P method to help the child constructively learn from the experience. Ask yourself, "Is it Reasonable? Is it Simple? Is it a Valuable learning tool? Is it Practical?"

Also, natural consequences are a great parenting tool! Take for example, forcing a child to bring her umbrella to school. Instead, let her get soaked and she'll remember it on her own next time.

**Zoo redo: "You must bring me your clothes by the time I count to ten, or you wear your pajamas." (Be ready to follow through!)**

I'm no perfect parent, so I'm grateful that asking my children's forgiveness allows me a fresh start. God is a perfect parent, and truly knowing Him motivates obedience. Psalm 119:32 says, "I run in the path of your commands, for you have set my heart free." We find surprising freedom in subjecting our will to a loving, kind and trustworthy authority who desires our well-being. A freedom our children deserve as well.

**Zoo redo: Remember my purse.**


Look for these new VeggieTales® t-shirts in Christian Bookstores this summer!

When Jimmy and Jerry Gourd were cleaning up after "Josh and the Big Wall," they noticed that the spilled Slushee had dried in the hot sun. Being the hungry guys that they are, they peeled some off the bricks and ate it! It was delicious! So— straight from the Big Idea Kitchens, here's a recipe for you to make your very own—

# Slushee Peels!

**Supplies:**

*2 cups very ripe fresh fruit such as peaches , apricots, or berries for each 13" x 15" fruit strip*

*1 tablespoon honey for each 2 cups of fruit*

*2 teaspoons lemon juice (optional)*

*Colander*

*Large cooking pot and spoon*

*Cookie sheet with sides*

*Plastic wrap and knife*

*Stove and oven*

**Instructions:**

1. Wash the fruit. Take out all seeds and stems. Cut fruit into small pieces.
2. Put fruit and honey into the pot. Cook over low heat until the fruit is soft.
3. Pour off juice and add 2 teaspoons lemon juice for each 2 cups of fruit to prevent fruit from darkening Then let the fruit mixture sit until it is cool enough to be handled. Once the fruit mixture has cooled press it through a colander.
4. Cover a large cookie sheet with plastic wrap.
5. Pour the fruit mixture onto the covered cookie sheet. Spread the mixture to about 1/8" thickness.
6. Turn the oven on the lowest setting (around 140 degrees) and set the fruit mixture inside to dry. The drying process may take up to 18 hours so plan on a couple of drying days. When the mixture peels away from the paper easily, it is ready to eat.
7. Cut the dried fruit into strips and store in an air tight container in a cool place. It will keep up to one month.

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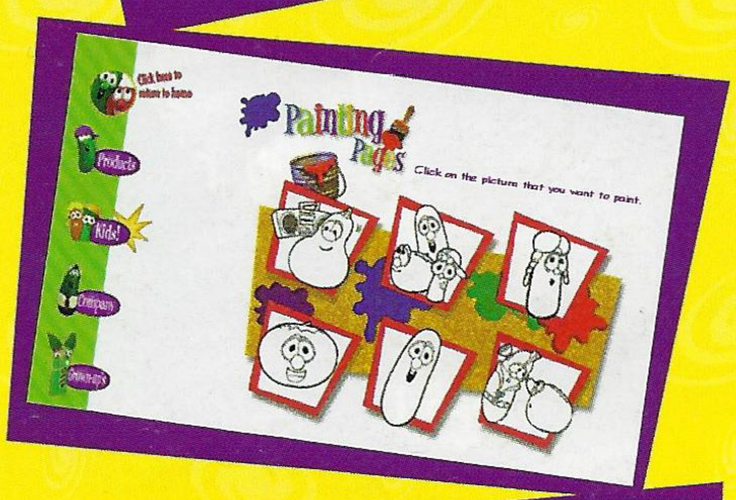

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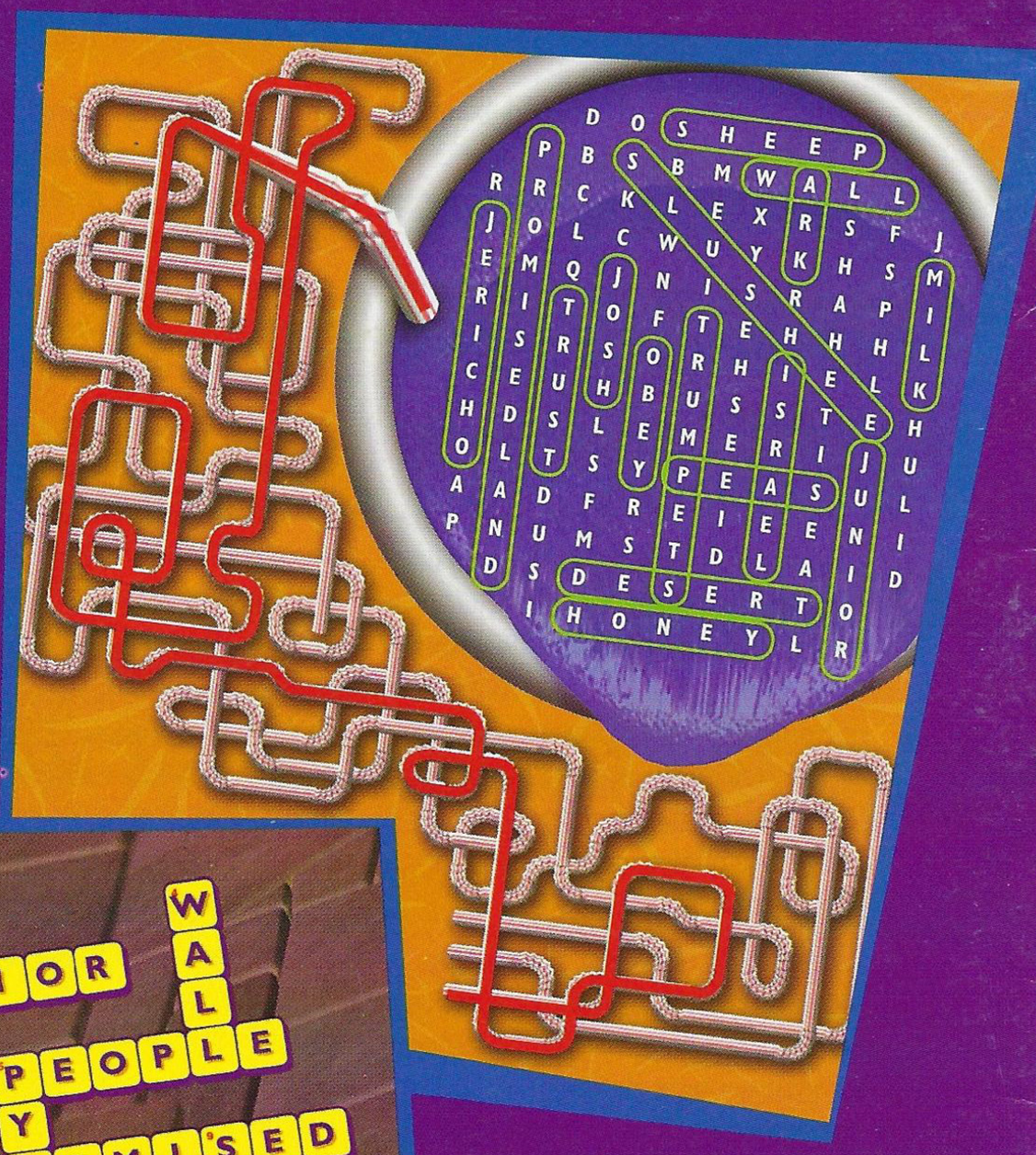
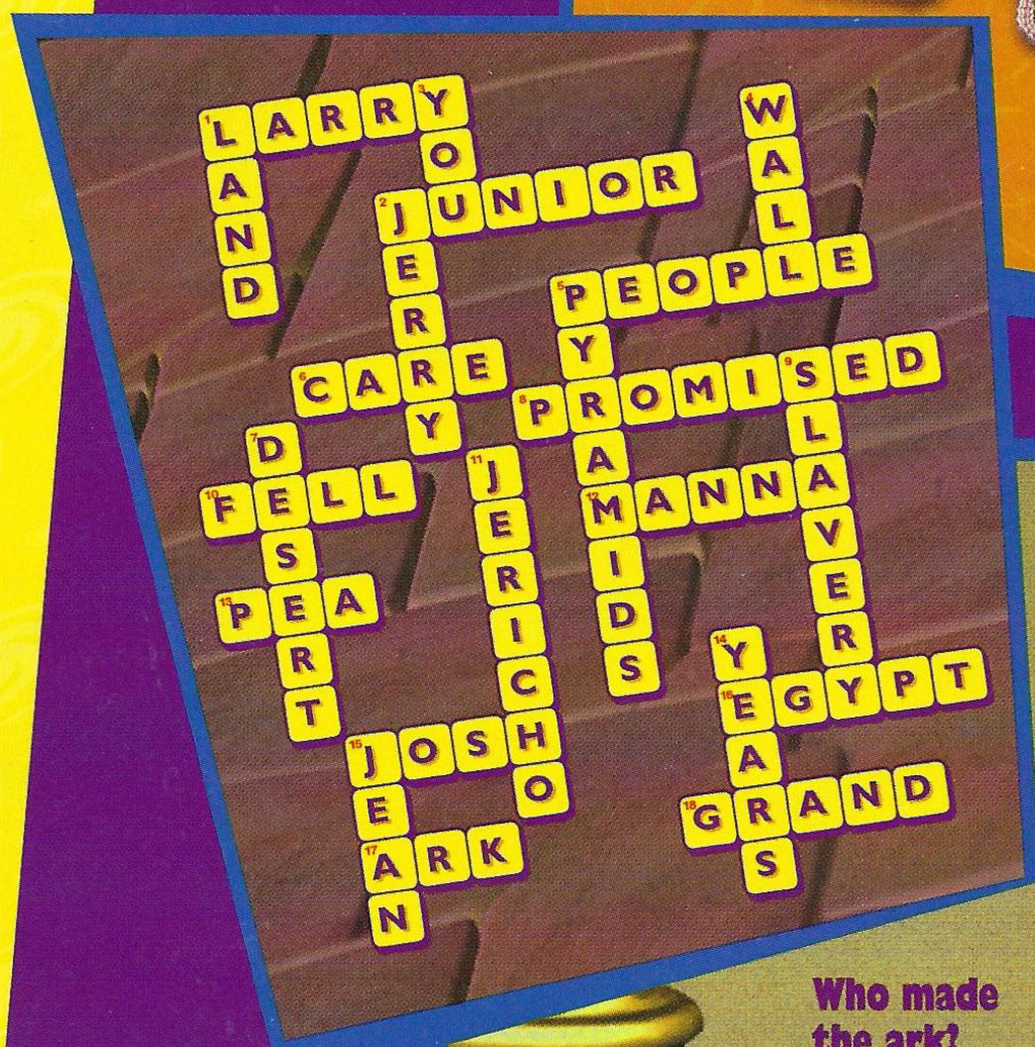
# Don't look now,

but here are the answers for the games and puzzles included in this issue of 'What's the Big Idea?'



**What kind of wood was it made of?**

b. Acacia

**What was it covered with?**

a. Gold

**Who made the ark?**

b. Bezalel

**The poles were made to:**

c. Carry it

**How big was it?**

b. 2.5 cubits long by 1.5 cubits wide and 1.5 cubits high

**On the top were shapes of:**

c. Cheribum (angels)

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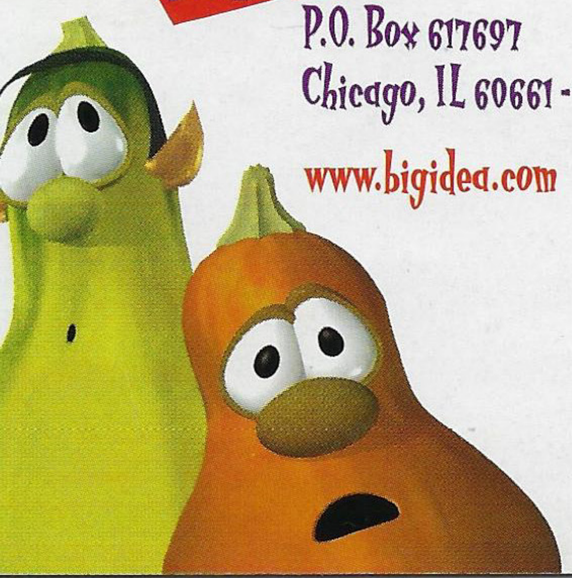

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